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Community Spirit

Proud Kailuans celebrate their annual Fourth of July Parade. **By Kristen Nemoto**

IN THE QUIANT beach town of Kailua, a mile-long strip called Kainalu Drive stretches parallel to Kailua Beach with hundreds of plantation-style homes in between. The area is home base to many Kailuans who are eager to celebrate and proudly share their love for the community whenever the opportunity arises. One such occasion — a tradition that’s looked forward to every year — is the annual Kailua Fourth of July Parade, a spirited event that’s filled with American flags, cheers and lots of dancing.

“I feel kind of bad because it seems like we end up joining the parade after it’s pau,” laughs Norman Aweau, referring to his longtime habit of increasing the volume of his outside porch speakers for the “Electric Slide.” It has been a tradition each year for the 83-year-old resident — a

dedicated community volunteer and former grand marshal for the 2010 Kailua Fourth of July Parade — to crank up the catchy tune once the fire truck appears behind the caboose of the parade train, signaling the procession’s end. He doesn’t mean to cause a dance party parade of his own, but people within a sound’s distance can’t seem to resist.

“It’s a great parade,” he continues. “It really brings everybody, the whole community, together.”

Founded in 1969 by the Kailua Chamber of Commerce, the Kailua Fourth of July Parade has become an annual celebration of patriotism and pride for laid-back Kailua residents. The parade’s co-chair, John Keene, says the event symbolizes the many hands and hearts that go into making Kailua a special community.

“Kailua has so much to offer,” Keene says. “(There are) gorgeous beaches, fresh breezes, shopping, fine cuisine, bike paths and walking trails.”

He says island residents can expect this year’s parade to shine with more than 100 entrants, which include bands, horseback riders, vintage cars and Keene’s favorite attendees

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— veterans. Fittingly, the parade's theme this year is "Let Freedom Ring Kailua" in honor of all veterans who have served and who currently serve overseas.

"The overall goal of the parade is to say thank you to our men and women of the Armed Forces and (acknowledge) the sacrifices they have made and continue to make for our country," says Keene, who is also proud to recognize all of the hard work that tireless volunteers have done to make this year's parade come to life.

"The committee consists of a group of volunteers who do all they can during the seven months leading up to the event to prepare, plan and launch a successful

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parade that everyone can enjoy," Keene says. "Kailua is a wonderful town where everyone is welcome and so we encourage people to come and watch."

The parade starts at 10 a.m. on North Kainalu Drive. Come early to claim your spot on the side of the street. And, Aweau warns, if you hear the "Electric Slide" playing before or after the parade, be prepared to get up and dance.

"Like I tell my neighbors who live around me," Aweau chuckles, "if I don't see you dancing, I'll tap you on your shoulder when you walk by."

For updated information, call 261.7997 or visit kailuachamber.com.

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